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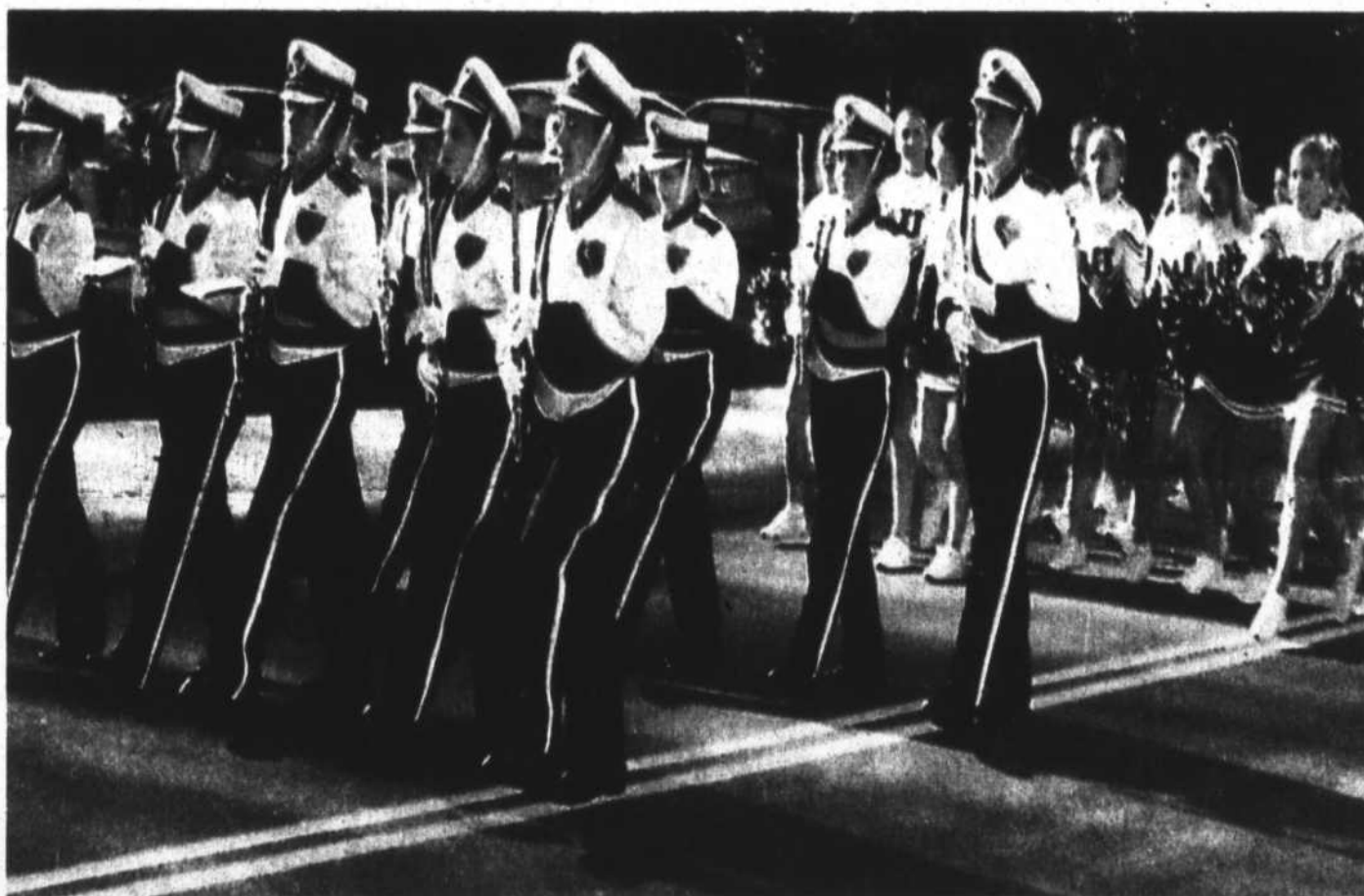
Eagle Walk 2003



On Saturday more than 300 people gathered to show their support of the Eagles football team at their home opener, making the annual walk from Kates gymnasium to Community Stadium.

Participants included AU cheerleaders, the marching band and various campus groups.

"I was overwhelmed by the wonderful response to this annual tradition," said Shirley Stary, director of student activities. "The best crowd we have had in years. It is so much fun to do this event with the band each year."



Is AU too crowded?

By DAVID LAWRENCE
Collegian reporter

Many Ashland University students have noticed that the campus has become more crowded than in years past. The common perception is that it is mainly due to the large incoming freshman class.

Junior Kathy Boyd said, "...Convo especially seems a lot more crowded than last year."

Other students and faculty are said to be echoing her statements. Susan Guiher-Huff, director of the Ashland University Writing Center, has also noticed more activity in the writing lab.

"The response from freshman students is greater than at this time last year. There are 12 more appointments this week of only freshman, not including walk-ins," Guiher-Huff said.

Director of Admissions, Thomas Mansperger, says the larger freshmen class is contributing minimally to the more crowded campus. Official statistics are not finalized until late October, but based on the most recent data, there are approximately five percent more freshmen for the fall 2003 semester compared to the fall 2002 semester. However, the statistics from the office of admission conflict.

According to the Undergraduate Admission Activity Report, as of Sept. 3, 2003, the increase in total undergraduate admissions is up two percent.

The major reason why the on-campus, undergraduate population is up is due to higher retention rates. More than 92 percent of the class of 2006 continued at AU for the spring 2003 semester.

The admissions department attributes the higher retention rate at AU to several factors.

The department is more carefully selecting what students to recruit by using ACT data and by being more selective in choosing which students to admit.

In addition, what students are looking for in schools is changing. Prospective students are searching out smaller, safer environments when choosing a college or university.

Plus, a higher percentage of high school students are enrolling in college. The increase in the undergraduate student population is not exclusive to AU.

According to Mansperger, available statistics show that private colleges in Ohio similar in size to AU have tentatively increased their enrollments.

See "Freshmen" page 8

Unspoken seating rules observed in Convo

By CRYSTAL CULP
Collegian Managing Editor

With the first morning classes of the semester finished for the day, Katie makes her way to the dining hall with her roommate for lunch. The noon rush waits inside the double-door entry way to have their Eagle cards swiped.

Katie and her roommate go to the grill to wait for convo's hamburger with fries. Once they both have assembled their meal, they look for an available table.

The first one they see is on the far side of the salad bar. Although it is relatively crowded, they manage to find a booth near the middle along the windows. Without realizing it, these freshmen girls have violated two distinct unspoken rules of eating in convo. Unaware of their surroundings, these two AU students have sat themselves in the heart of the athletic section in convo. They are completely surrounded by athletes. It will only take these new students a week or so before they begin to recognize the precise method dictating where students sit in the school cafeteria.

It is an elaborate seating system that has been in place for many years at AU. No one can seem to remember it any other way. All students who eat in convo on a daily basis are aware of the seating chart. There are designated sections for different

groups of people, and unspoken rules that many students are unwilling to break.

The area to the side of the salad bar is known to be the prime seating area for the wrestling team, the volleyball players, along with the football players.

"I feel funny when I sit on the athletic side," senior Cheryl Hyland said referring to this section of convo.

Katie and her friend would have been able to find a table easier if they knew the second rule. They failed to mark their territory clearly.

"Students use their keys to mark their place," said Deleasa Randall-Griffiths, Ph.D. and associate professor of communication arts. Randall-Griffiths has studied the trends in convo for several years with her interpersonal communication classes.

"The rule of convo is to stake out territory," Randall-Griffiths said explaining why the placing of keys is important.

She explained that we are very territorial as human beings, which is why students feel the need to claim a table before eating.

It is a commonly accepted practice to drop one's keys on a table to claim it for the meal.

Most students stop to claim a table before obtaining their food; this ensures that everyone

can be seated according to their assigned section in convo.

When someone attempts to take a claimed table, there is a strong reaction.

"What are you doing? My stuff's here!" Garriss said describing her reaction.

In her informal research with her classes, Randall-Griffiths explained that there is a distinct seating pattern in the dining hall. She described some of the primary sections of convo including the area where the athletes sit in contrast to the Fishbowl where the art students sit.

Some students have actually attempted to draw a map of the seating arrangement in convo. In Race, Ethnic and Minority Issues class, senior Jackie Mason led the class in creating a diagram of the seating chart as part of a class discussion on the convo phenomenon. All full-time residential students in the class were able to successfully identify and mark the place where they belong in convo.

"Not only do they stake (their) territory with keys each time, but by repetition they mark it their territory," she said. Thus, students have designated sections in convo because they have created them through habit.

Each class passes down the seating arrangement to the next

class although there are various changes from year to year. The upperclassmen teach the underclassmen what is acceptable.

"I learned where the soccer players sit on my college visit," senior Mike Stoerckel said.

The booths immediately inside the double doors on the Andrews side entrance are known to be the soccer players' section. The tradition of the soccer players sitting in these booths has been passed down from year to year and is well-recognized by the rest of the student population.

Stoerckel arrives each night for dinner between 6 and 6:15 p.m., otherwise the coveted booths by the doors will be gone. When the booths are taken, the soccer players are forced to move in closer to the dessert bar. By doing so, they are encroaching on the section of convo which is known to be composed primarily of Greek students. It is in this area that many sorority sisters and fraternity brothers sit together.

Former senior Paul Frame explained that, "The round table where the Kappa Sigs or the swimmers sit," is one of his favorite locations. The swimmers are found peacefully along the brick wall in this section.

"I sit by the stained glass window. It's the track nook," runner Ric Bement said.

During a typical dinner in convo, the stained glass windows section of convo is filled with athletic members of the track and cross country teams. However, the booths along the sides in this section have been claimed by a variety of smaller cliques composed of a variety of individuals.

There is one section in convo where everyone is welcome. The purple chairs and tables which are to the left of the salad bar and surround the Fish Bowl are a safe haven for all kinds of people.

"I eat in the neutral area," senior Suzanne Weaver said referring to this section of convo. "I feel more welcome here... in other places (of convo) people stare at you; you feel uncomfortable."

Students who do not meet the labels of the other sections enjoy making this area of convo their own.

It seems that in the purple section, everyone regardless of their label is accepted. As opposed to other sections, there are no clearly taken tables.

And what about assigning sections? Forget it.

"If I assigned seats in class, students would be so mad at me," Randall-Griffiths said.

There's no doubt the same would hold true for convo.